DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 149 638 FL 009 231

TITLE English Language Teaching Profile: Cyprus.
INSTITUTION British Council, London (England). English-Teaching Information Centre.
PUB DATE Nov 77
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Finance; *Educational Policy; *Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); *Higher Education; Instructional Materials; *Language Instruction; Language of Instruction; *Language Role; Language Teachers; Language Usage; Second Language Learning; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Cyprus; Greek Cypriots

ABSTRACT

This profile in outline form of the English language teaching situation in Cyprus discusses the role of English within the Greek Cypriot community and within the educational system. Areas covered include English language requirements and English within the curriculum, teaching personnel and teacher training, instructional materials, English outside the educational system, and British and American support for the teaching of English. A general statement of the strengths and weaknesses on English language teaching in Cyprus follows. The document concludes with a short list of current research. (CLK)

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ENGLISH-TEACHING INFORMATION CENTRE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFILE

November 1977

Country: CYPRUS

It has become increasingly meaningless to speak of anything "...in Cyprus" without differentiating between the two communities of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. There is virtually no communication between the two groups, and the educational systems therefore drift further and further apart. For this reason the profile is in two quite separate parts.

GREEK CYPRIOTS

1. Role of English

1.1 With its British Colonial history Cyprus has a large residue of people fully conversant with English. The language is much in evidence, and visitors will be struck by the amount of English on notices, on television, etc and by the very large number of people, particularly in the urban centres who can use English. The considerable British military presence in the Sovereign base areas, and the number of United Nations personnel scattered throughout the island, mean that the English language is in considerable day to day use. With the enormous increase in tourism and the commercial expansion of the last decade, English has tended to become increasingly a second rather than a foreign language.

1.2 In 1957 during the struggle for independence there was a general burning of books in the Primary schools and English was removed from the curriculum at this level. It was re-introduced in 1965, and since then it has enjoyed a remarkable revival of interest. The language tuition industry flourishes; Foreign Language Institutes are run by the Government; private schools, colleges, and institutes abound; and individual teachers charge up to C£5 an hour for one-to-one lessons.

1.3 English is now the passport to higher education. The school leaver may not need this passport immediately if he is going to Athens or Salonika University, but eventually he will find English to be almost essential to him, especially for further studies or postgraduate work. Entry to Government Service, the Police, the Banks, the Cyprus Airways Corporation, and to most of the professions is possible only if the applicant can satisfy the requirements of a competitive examination in which English is the most important subject. A young secondary school leaver wishing to enter the business world is at a considerable disadvantage if he does not have a genuine working knowledge of the language.

1.4 There is a widespread but arguable opinion that English will at first be the primary language of offical communication between the two communities when some kind of settlement is eventually achieved.

2. English within the Educational System

English is taught as a foreign language, Greek being the medium of instruction in all public elementary and secondary schools. There is no university in

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Cyprus and the only public institutions which operate at the tertiary level are the Pedagogical Academy (which trains primary school teachers and does not use English as the medium of instruction), the Higher Technical Institute, (where the standards are high and where English is the main language of instruction) and the Pedagogical Institute (the embattled in-service training centre where English is prominent but no more).

2.1 The Ministry of Education makes the following provision for the teaching of English in the public schools.

2.1.1 Primary schools:
80 minutes per week in 5th and 6th year. (Realistically, often rather less than this, especially in the 1- or 2-teacher schools).

2.1.2 Secondary schools (Gymnasia):
4 x 45 minutes per week except in (a) commercial lyceums, which have 5 x 45 minutes in 4th, 5th and 6th year. (b) classical (= arts) streams, which have 5 x 45 minutes in 5th and 6th year. (c) some selected gymnasia (eg Kykko Boys' and Girls'), which have "optional" extra lessons in the 4th, 5th and 6th year, bringing the total number of periods to 6 weekly.

Note: The Minister takes a personal interest in increasing hours, and foresees a rise to 8 lessons in all 5th and 6th forms.

2.1.3 Pedagogical Academy (3-year course):
(a) 90 minutes per week (including 45 minutes of methodology in 2nd and 3rd years). (b) 270 minutes in 3rd year for those specialising in ELT.

2.1.4 Higher Technical Institute:
All classes are conducted in English. There is no formal language instruction.

2.1.5 Pedagogical Institute:
The in-service teacher training courses for teachers of English are not all conducted in English. Much of the published material is in English.

2.1.6 Foreign Language Institutes:
Most of the Foreign Language Institutes' work is teaching English. A large proportion of the clientèle is school children, but predominantly children of the urban élite. The Foreign Language Institutes, alone in the public sector, offer opportunities for students wishing to prepare for external examinations in English such as the three Cambridge Certificates and the General Certificate of Education Ordinary and Advanced levels. They play a valuable part in teacher training, since teachers, who pay only £1 a year for each course, form the overwhelming majority of Cambridge First Certificate, Proficiency and Diploma candidates.

2.2 No English Literature is taught in the Gymnasia. The Foreign Language Institutes teach Literature as part of the Cambridge Diploma Course, which small numbers of students attend.

2.3 Examinations:
English is not examined in the primary schools or in the Gymnasia. It is not formally examined in the Gymnasium leaving certificate, though teachers "may include" a continuous assessment mark.

2.4 Since English is not examined, proficiency in it is not formally required for advancement, but see para 1.3. Those intending to go to non-Greek-medium higher education usually take an English proficiency test at the British Council or the American Institute.

2.5 Responsibility for syllabuses and choice of textbooks:

2.5.1 Primary and secondary textbooks are prescribed by the Ministry of Education. The Minister is formally advised by the Senior Inspector of English, who in Practice consults the other Inspectors, the British Adviser, and senior secondary teachers of English.

2.5.2 Teachers of English are advised, however, that they may choose other textbooks than the prescribed ones, and follow other syllabi, as long as their Headmaster and Inspector are convinced that this alternative material best meets the needs of the class. (This applies in general only to years 4-6 of the Gymnasia, and there only to "fast" and "slow" streams.) The Inspectors feel that they are extremely liberal on this point, but classroom teachers are less certain of the fact, and tend to play safe in the face of advisers who are also evaluators.

2.5.3 Foreign Language Institute material is selected in exactly the same way, but since teaching is not inspected, the teachers feel that they have a much greater degree of freedom, and they are also being encouraged to prepare more and more of their own materials.

2.6 The Inspectorate:

2.6.1 Primary Schools: The task of supervision of English rests with the General Primary Inspectors - some 30 in number - all able and experienced officers but not English specialists.

2.6.2 Secondary Schools: There are three Inspectors of English, who have the task of supervising 250 secondary school teachers of English. The system demands that written reports be submitted on every teacher every year and there are circumstances in which two reports are required. This means that the Inspectors are very much preoccupied with routine "inspections" and denied the opportunity of arranging systematic in-service training which would provide much needed professional renewal and stimulation. Meetings are held with all secondary teachers of English at the beginning of the academic year, and some courses for teachers are arranged. The secondary inspectors do not visit primary schools.

2.7 English for special purposes: Separate material is recommended by the Ministry for Technical and Vocational Schools, but it is irrelevant to the needs of the students.

2.8 The Foreign Language Institutes provide English teaching for anyone who wants it, including non-specialist adults. In practice there are very few such non-specialists, because there are so many other ways for a non-examination candidate to learn better English (eg newspapers, TV, films, BFBS, BBC etc).

3. Teaching Cadre

Teachers are paid according to their post, not their abilities or qualifications.

Primary and secondary teachers are breeds apart, and the ambitions of the former centre around becoming one of the latter, a feat which they can only achieve by somehow getting a degree or its equivalent. With the demise of the London University External BA, this has become very difficult.

3.1 Primary Schools:

Under the circumstances it is remarkable that there are any good teachers in the primary sector at all, but there are. All the teachers are Cypriot, graduates either of the Pedagogical Academy, Nicosia (3 year course), or of its predecessor - the now defunct Greek/Turkish College of Morphou -, or of the mainland Greek Training Colleges (2 year courses). Some primary teachers have attended one year Diploma courses in the teaching of English in the United Kingdom, but without exception these teachers have sought promotion to the secondary sector on returning to Cyprus. They wait for between 3 and 6 years for promotion to a "second-class" grade of secondary school teacher, and then they try to gain an external BA in order to be "first-class" teachers. Efforts to create advisers from this group have so far been frustrated by the primary teachers' union's refusal to accept any but a new, distinct salary scale for such posts.

The problem is of course one of finance and status, and highlights dramatically the gulf between the primary and secondary levels.

3.2 Secondary Schools:

3.2.1 There are 250 teachers of English, over 200 of whom are university graduates. About 100 of these have had at least part of their training in England. Many have external general degrees of the University of London - one of their subjects usually being English - which has meant that at least one year has been spent in England. Most of the non-graduates have also attended courses in Britain gaining qualifications such as a post-graduate Diploma in the Teaching of English, the Cambridge Diploma of English Studies and so on. This is a very satisfactory situation and the flow of teachers to England for further studies continues. In 1977/78, for example, 3 secondary and 3 primary teachers are studying on full-year ELT courses and 7 on short ELT courses under the CEF Scheme.

3.2.2 An increasingly large number of graduates come from Athens and Salonika. Their initial training includes no relevant ELT methodology and this presents a serious in-service training problem to a Ministry which has too few Inspectors to mount a satisfactory training programme (see para 2.5.2).

3.2.3 Most of the secondary teachers of English are Greek Cypriot. There are one or two British spouses of Cypriots working in Gymnasia, as well as, eg one Hungarian, one Romanian, etc.

3.3 Initial training of teachers of English:

The Pedagogical Academy trains primary teachers, and prospective teachers of English have some specialisation in their 3rd year. Secondary teachers need have no special pedagogical training, since their degree is regarded as sufficient proof of their all-round brilliance. Graduates of Greek universities, even those who have read English, tend to be noticeably less fluent than one would anticipate.

3.4 Further training of local teachers:

Regular in-service training is organised as follows:

3.4.1 A limited number (cf 2.6.2) of long or short seminars or courses

are organised by the Inspectors of English and staffed by them and the Adviser. The inspectorate tends to identify needs quickly, and responds promptly to teachers' requests. These seminars are followed up by a programme of class visits and counselling.

3.4.2 Long or short seminars or courses are proposed and organised by the Pedagogical Institute in response to requests by the Ministry or on the initiative of the Institute of Education staff or the Adviser. They are operated by teachers seconded to the Pedagogical Institute (there are no permanent staff) and by the Inspectors on a "friendly cooperation" basis.

3.4.3 When invited, the Adviser tours primary schools and organises small local seminars, gives demonstration lessons, and exemplifies the teaching for the radio broadcasts. The Educational Broadcasting Service Staff also do similar work disguised as "audience research".

3.4.4 Vacation courses are non-starters as serious training. During the short holidays, a single morning is the most that people will spare, and during the summer holiday nothing moves. Teachers would be willing to attend summer courses if they led to (a) paper qualifications and therefore (b) personal advancement.

3.4.5 The Ministry has, however, held one Easter course for teachers arriving at a promotion bar after their 7th year of service. Crossing the bar is necessary for promotion.

3.5 A group of teachers in Limassol formed a local association of teachers of English in 1972 and have produced programmes of activities including an annual conference supported by the inspectors and the Council.

4. Teaching Materials

4.1 No school suffers from a shortage of textbooks but the smaller rural schools which are often dependent upon impoverished school committees have to do without "luxury" items such as tape recorders and record players, and village parents are often unwilling to buy textbooks for their children. Large urban schools have everything and the problem is rather to persuade the staff to use what they have.

4.2 Because textbooks are prescribed by the Ministry of Education (cf para 2.5) the pattern is inevitably one of uniformity. Fortunately the books are for the most part satisfactory at both levels.

4.3 The textbooks most widely used in 1976/77 were:

Primary	Classes V and VI	The Argonauts English Course Book One, by W R Lee and L Koullis
Secondary	Classes I - IV	as above, Books One, Two, Three and Four, and Intermediate Comprehension Passages by D Byrne
	Classes V and VI	First Certificate in English by W Fowler and Scientific English Practice by Thornley

4.4 Other materials:

4.4.1 Gramophone records which accompany the Argonauts Course are sometimes used in Greek schools. Some primary schools make occasional use of recordings specially prepared by the British Council,

and copied and distributed by the Pedagogical Institute.

4.4.2 Two series, of 24 and 20 10-minute radio programmes based on the Argonauts Book I, were produced by the Adviser and the staff of the Educational Broadcasting Service in 1975-77, and broadcast during the years 1976-78. They are also available on cassette or reel for schools wishing to purchase them at cost. At least two Teachers' Aids are sent free to each school. (Copies of all this material are in the Council Library).

4.5 Materials production:

4.5.1 The Ministry will not fund a full-time unit, but often asks for a course in 'Textbook Writing' to be included among the CEFS courses. Those who attend such courses seem to use them as sabbaticals in which to find suitable books to plagiarise and translate. On their return, they are in a strong position to have these "newly-written" books put on the "approved" lists since they are the persons approving the lists.

4.5.2 The Pedagogical Institute had an audio-visual unit where the equipment was fine but the output temperamental. Recorded materials could be copied and disseminated on request, usually breaking copyright in the process. This unit has now been transferred to the parallel unit in the Educational Broadcasting Department, and has not yet been seen in operation.

4.5.3 Ministry employees including the Adviser, are occasionally commissioned to produce materials.

4.5.4 Private individuals sometimes produce works which they must then try and have "approved".

5. English outside the Educational System

5.1 Private schools:

5.1.1 In 1976-7 there were 26 full-time schools in the private sector, where either the medium of instruction is English or between 6 and 12 periods of English are taught each week. The number of full-time students involved is large, of the order of 6,000.

5.1.2 There are also numbers of small privately-run coaching centres, usually part-time enterprises set up by practising secondary school teachers. They are sources of controversy for officials and teachers in that they ensure widely disparate abilities among the children in school classes.

Opinion is divided as to whether the private coaching should be more severely curtailed by legislation (there is already legislation to ensure that they register with the Ministery before a licence is granted) or forcibly improved in its standards. The former is impractical because parents are so ambitious for their children, the latter impossible to achieve in practice. The only other alternative, to improve the standard of English teaching and learning in schools to the point where extra coaching is no longer necessary, would be the best solution but almost by definition could never be achieved.

5.1.3 The Foreign Language Institutes are government-run, but outside the main stream of the educational system. See para 2.1.6 for their importance to the learning of English.

5.1.4 The English School is neither part of the ordinary state system, nor a true private school. It has its roots in the British Grammar Schools, enters pupils for O and A levels, and for a long time enjoyed a special relationship with the British Council because of British financial and educational support. Neither of these props is now seriously in evidence, and the relationship is cordial but weakening, especially as the English School becomes increasingly a kind of GCE College.

5.2 A few institutions (eg Productivity Centre, Cooperative College) make an attempt to match the teaching given to their students with their needs: but the expertise available in ESP is strictly limited.

6. British support for the teaching of English

6.1 There was an ELO/ACE post from 1970 to 1972, after which it was suppressed. Assistant Representative then took over responsibility for English language work, at the same time as doing the same for other non-ELT administrative work. Meanwhile the Assistant Representative post was down-graded. Thus official British Council support has seriously diminished over the last decade.

6.2 From 18 CEC teachers of English in 1972/3, there were 5 in 1976/7; and from 15 guaranteed posts at the English School in 1972/3, the number dropped to 2 by 1977.

6.2.1 However, the bright spot is that one of the CEC teachers proved to be most able and energetic, achieving much in a short time by way of expanding his job from the stated job description, and becoming closely acquainted and associated with senior and middle management in the Ministry of Education. His post was upgraded for his particular benefit, and is now held by him as a KELT post with responsibility for advising teachers and officials. He is regarded by all outsiders as representing the Council, a superior equivalent of the ELO/ACE and has in most respects made up for the run-down in official British support outlined above.

6.3 There are no British volunteers working in Cyprus.

6.4 British personnel turn up in Cyprus and look for teaching jobs, often because they have come for a holiday and like the place. No figures are available for the number involved, and it changes constantly.

6.5 The main work of the Adviser is in operating alongside Inspectors and counterparts in various fields. He has instigated, executed and evaluated projects from in-service training courses to educational broadcasting programmes, always in conjunction with Cypriots. He frequently gives high-quality demonstration lessons to practising teachers which are much appreciated.

6.6 The other two ELT staff are involved only in direct teaching, as the FLI's with a small amount of work at the pre-service Pedagogical Academy.

6.7 Regular summer courses came to an end with the Turkish invasion of

1974. In any case of para 3.4.4. Book exhibitions specifically related to ELT have not been seen for some years, but a fine display of Simplified Readers is being shown in 1977.

6.7.1 There is a reasonably full stock of ELT books in a special room, which has been considerably underused because of its geographical position. It is shortly to be incorporated into the main British Council library. British textbooks are easily available, though not greatly used.

6.7.2 The British Council has created 50 Book Boxes, for loan to schools. Each one contains approximately 30 titles (100 books) of Simplified Readers, suitable for different age ranges. These boxes have been a great success, and are in much demand. They are usually loaned to a teacher for a term or two, and are often used as the class library. Because they are of a manageable size, and because most of the titles are likely to be readable by the students at whom they are directed, the primary problem of book-reading in schools - to get students physically to the books and then to choose one - is resolved.

6.7.3 ODM books' presentations have totalled £13,500 in the last three years, and have been made predominantly to secondary schools. By 1979 most of these will have been covered. The true usefulness of these ODM presentations is to be doubted, especially when related to (a) administrative time involved and (b) the value of making, instead, individual personal presentations.

6.7.4 Argonauts Book I is now printed by Zavallis Press in Nicosia on licence from Oxford University Press, and any other reprints of the course will be executed by them (Books 2,3,4).

6.8 There is no direct teaching undertaken by the Council, since the Representative has considered it to be counterproductive both in terms of acceptability to those Cypriots who might feel that it was not our business to be involved in this market.

7. American support for ELT

7.1 Presentations of books have been made by America to various institutions. These often take the form of a certain number of graded readers as well as a fair number of essentially political tracts and books which are not appropriate to the recipients.

7.2 Direct teaching, and regular direct support of ELT, are not undertaken.

7.3 The American Centre library nicely complements that of the British Council in that afficionados of the one tend to decry the other. The books are to our eyes 'heavy' for the most part, and reflect the different purpose of the USIS as an overtly propagandising machine. But the result is that in matters of reference the library is superior to ours, and tends to be well used by advanced students.

7.4 The cultural programme has been for the last two years designed as general entertainment, to which people have gone merely to hear something in English; but the intended direction for the next two years is to a more carefully defined interest group which will reciprocate the Americans' interest.

7.5 Fulbright scholarships are awarded regularly, but rarely to teachers specifically of English.

8. General Statement

8.1 Strengths:

8.1.1 The presence of competent indeed expert ELT inspectors at secondary level and a small proportion of experienced well-trained teachers of English in the gymnasia.

8.1.2 The beginning at both primary and secondary levels of a systematic in-service training programme; and the availability of Inspectorate staff to deal with this, at secondary level at least.

8.1.3 The fact that British-trained staff receive promotion much faster than their colleagues means that an increasing number of head-teachers and middle officials are ex-teachers of English and take a special interest in the language situation.

8.2 Weaknesses:

8.2.1 No capable Cypriot lecturer in charge of language and methodology at the Pedagogical Academy, to help to ensure the flow of well-trained staff into the primary schools. This may be rectified by the promotion in 1983 of a former CEFS Fellow, Mr A Shakallis, MEd. Linguistics, at present working part-time.

8.2.2 The absence of Specialist Inspectors of English at primary level.

8.2.3 Inadequate time for the teaching of English, in particular at the teacher training college. Thirteen lessons are devoted to Greek and only Four to English in the Lyceum stage (first three years) of secondary education.

8.2.4 The absence of a truly integrated educational process, the result of a "brain-drain" from primary schools of teachers seeking status and salary found only at the secondary level, and of secondary school teachers seeking an escape from the classroom to the too frequent futilities of Pedagogical Institute work, posts in the Public Information Office, and administrative jobs within the Ministry.

9. Current Research and Bibliography

9.1 Earlier start of English learning:
Experiments with beginning English in the 4th year of the primary school at two Nicosia schools.

9.2 Extra English periods:
Experiments with extra English in IVth, Vth and VIth forms (two more optional periods) at four secondary schools.

9.3 Theoretical research:
The Pedagogical Institute claims to be engaged in research but this description is hardly justified by the works of compilation and paraphrase which, fortunately, still repose in manuscript form in the Institute offices.

9.4 Research Projects:
The Ministry occasionally commissions selected personnel of the Pedagogical Institute to undertake research projects, usually in the field of child psychology and development. No cases have come to light in which these projects, which usually remain in the form of internal memoranda, have been used to justify administrative changes.

9.5 Background notes:
See the Cyprus Education Profile.

If this Profile is more than a year old further up-to-date information may be found in ETIC Archives.